(b) if so, the details in this regard; and

(c) the steps, if any, taken to tackle the situatiion?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The process of economic restructuring in the Soviet Union has had a negative impact on the supply of non-ferrous metals by Soviet suppliers. As per the LGCIS provisional statistics the import of non-ferrous metals stood at Rs. 24.86 crores only during January-August 1991 as against about Rs. 59.97 crores during the same period in 1990. The matter has been taken up with the Soviet Authorities.

**Retaliatory Trade action against India due to violation of U.S. Trade Law**

359. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have recently received any communication from U.S. Government with regard to taking action against India for violations of the Special 301 clause of U.S. trade law; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof and what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

**Indo-Soviet Trade Agreement**

360. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is an uncertainty over the Indo-Soviet rupee trade agreement as per the news-item entitled "Political uncertainty hits Indo-Soviet Trade' which appeared in the Hindustan Times of the 1st September, 1991;

(b) if so, what are the facts in this regard;

(c) whether there is any insistence on the part of the Soviet Union to trade in hard currency; and

(d) if so, what steps Government propose to take in this regard so that the Indo-Soviet trade flow does not suffer?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) The Agreement between India and the USSR providing for trade in non-convertible Indian rupees is valid up to 31st December, 1995. The rapid and structural economic and political changes taking place in the Soviet economy may however necessitate some changes in the trading format for ensuring smooth continuance of trade.

(c) No such proposal has been received.

(d) Does not arise.

**Ban on export of finished leather**

361. SHRI S. MADHAVAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of Government has been drawn to the news item which appeared in the Financial Express of the 19th September, 1991, captioned "Ban on finished leather export"; and

(b) if so, what steps have been taken to help the exporters who have already committed export-orders with foreign buyers before such ban?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Export Trade Control Order No. E(C)O, 88|AM(91) dated 5-8-91 had been issued by the Government to prohibit the export of certain types of semi-finished leather which were being exported under the guise of finished leather. There is no ban on the export of finished leather.

362. [*Transferred to 2nd December, 1991*]

**Import of Newsprint**

363. SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal with Government to allow decanalisation of newsprint to enable newspapers to import directly or through trading houses; and

(b) what measures Government propose to take to curb steep rise of prices of newsprints in view of its service to the nation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The customs duty on the imported standard newsprint has been abolished to keep the price of the basic raw material at reasonable level. Adequate foreign exchange has also been released to import newsprint to meet the Demand-Supply gap.

**Futility of the scheme of MPEDA for supply of diesel to fishing industry at subsidised rates**

364. SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the futility of the scheme of MPEDA to subsidise diesel fuel supplied to fishing industry due to cumbersome procedures;

(b) whether the industry has also represented on this matter;

(c) what are the reasons for ignoring units which exclusively operate deep sea fishing vessels without processing plants;

(d) whether it is a fact that shrimp caught by deep sea fishing vessels is totally for export;

(e) what steps are being taken to make the scheme feasible taking into account the plight of owners of fishing vessels without processing plants; and

(f) whether there is an excess capacity in marine products processing plants all over the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) The Government feels that the scheme is useful and working satisfactorily.

(b) The Association of Indian Fisheries Industries, Vizag, has pleaded for extension of the scope of the scheme to include also such vessel owners as are not exporters.

(c) and (e) Owners of deep sea fishing vessels without processing plants can avail the benefit of the scheme if they export their catches directly or through merchant exporters; in the latter case, they have also to produce a disclaimer certificate from the merchant exporter or export house or the trading house.

(d) Bulk of shrimp catch is exported.

(f) The capacity utilisation in marine products processing plants is high during peak seasons as the capacity is geared to peak season requirements when landings are high. During offseasons the utilisation is low.